

A BEACON LIGHT OF HOPE TO THEM
THAT SIT IN DARKNESS

Mayor James Austen

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.



The scene outside the new Home for the Blind on the opening day not long ago

A BEACON LIGHT OF HOPE TO THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS

— Major JAMES AUSTEN* —

Describes an Important Aspect of Army Work in the West Indies

EUSTACE was seven years of age when he came to us four or five years ago. Poor little chap! He had lived with an old and angry guardian who gave him excellent training if not in the kindest manner. As a result he was very clever at fending for himself. He could cook and he could keep house remarkably well for a small lad, but as small lads do sometimes, he was apparently extra good to himself. It happened one night that when his crotchety old guardian came home from a day-long absence at the market she found Eustace had used up all the coco-nut oil for his breakfast.

She was hungry and she was tired, and any drink she had taken during the day did not help her in the control of a sadistic temper. Her anger sought a vicious and painful retribution for this awful neglect in the matter of the oil. She would make him yell for mercy!

And the woman went out and plucked two ripe peppers and, grappling the pain-maddened child with her superior strength, rubbed the burning spices into the child's eyes. These sensitive organs, ready to inflame and torment at a speck of dust, now became the seat of excruciating agonies which left the little boy shocked and numb and full of fear, cowering lest there be worse to follow. He told no one of his night of torture nor of the days of darkness which lengthened out that awful night. He knew his way about so well and was so skilful with his fingers that no one noticed that the boy was blind, until one day the goats got out and Eustace, venturing beyond his own familiar gateway, failed to find the goats and only lost himself.

The dreadful crime was out! His guardian was arrested and punished, but what could be done for this embittered boy now sentenced to live for ever in the dark?

Happily, The Army has in Jamaica a greatly valued Home for the Blind, and Eustace is one of the unfortunate friends we have been glad to help. Now he may often be seen in company with a little deaf and dumb girl in the home. She is 'eyes' to Eustace and he is 'ears' to her.

TWO things of great importance happened in the Central America and West Indies Territory during the year just closed.

The most recent has been the joyous celebration of the Jubilee of the commencement of Army activities in the West Indies (and will have been fully reported in our news periodicals at the time), and the other was an event which took place earlier but was not wholly unconnected with it, for the opening campaign in Kingston, fifty years ago, included a special Meeting and tea for the blind of the city and, significantly enough, the outstanding event of the Jubilee Year, 1937, was the opening of The Army's new Institute for the Blind. It was a great joy to our Territorial Commander, Colonel Herbert Hodgson, that Lady Denham, wife of His Excellency the Governor of Jamaica, performed the ceremony. The Institute comprises an administration block, schoolroom, library, dining-room, kitchen, dormitories for the adult blind (men and women), workshops and servants' quarters.

On the day of the opening Lady Denham was accompanied by His Worship the Mayor (the Hon. H. A. L. Simpson) and the Custos of Kingston (the Hon. Noel Livingston), Principal Price, of the Calabar College, the Hon. H. E. Allen, Member of the Legislative Council, the Hon. B. Easter, Minister for Education, and many other prominent persons. The Calabar College Orchestra provided music and the blind students sang one of their sweet songs.

IT is almost ten years since The Army's Work for the Blind was commenced in the island. Authorities and Salvationists alike had long recognized the need for such activities, but little was done until two Officers were appointed to the Territory who had a relative who was deaf, dumb and blind. Their personal experience of how the difficulty of sightless eyes might be overcome by a study of the Braille and Moon systems of reading and writing, helped them to see possibilities for other unfortunate ones. In the city of Kingston they took one pupil in hand, but before long such success attended the experiment that it became necessary to open premises as a school where other blind persons could be received, and provision for feeding and sleeping these people in other parts of the city had to be made. From

* In an interview. Major James Austen, recently in England on furlough, was the Social Secretary for Jamaica, with responsibility for Men's and Women's Hostels, and three for the children of lepers, an Institute for the Blind, Prison and Police court Work and was Affiliation Officer. He has now taken up a similar post in Trinidad.

With the Torch on the Forest Trail

A Work of Healing and Salvation in Vendale, described by
Mrs. Adjutant HENRY FROST, South Africa

OUR Dispensary and Women's Work in Vendale are so closely connected (for the one is the outcome of the other), that it is impossible to write of them separately. Distressing cases of neglect among the people I meet start me seeking the cause and how to remedy it. As a result, during the past year 1,242 treatments have been given; the majority of which, and much of the suffering, could have been avoided by attention to the simplest rules of cleanliness and hygiene.

Last year's harvest in this district was the best for twelve years, but there was no thought for probable future years, and much of the harvest was wasted in making beer, so throughout the year there have been many casualties from beer-fights. Just a few weeks ago a woman was brought to us with a terrible gash across the back of her head; her husband had hit her with an axe, but she insisted on saying that she fell on a stone.

In our visitation we often come across whole villages suffering from sores and boils that have turned septic, and the trouble has spread as a result of their sleeping upon old goat-skins which have become infected. This knowledge sent me back to my industrial class for girls with a determination to teach them how to make clean, washable sleeping mats from the grass and reeds growing so plentifully in the bush and by the river-side.

In the actual mat-making I have been greatly helped by Mrs. Envoy Ndhlovu, who hails from Nyasaland. Sewing and knitting have also their place in the manual work curriculum.

To the native mind sickness comes because of an 'enemy,' sent to them through the medium of a wild cat; it therefore demands much patience to teach them that their greatest 'enemy' is the common fly, that it carries disease to them and upon the food they prepare. So that, although my women's meetings can scarcely be called Home League Gatherings, yet the principle is the same—trying to teach the women to make happier, healthier homes, and to use the things at hand to improve living conditions.

A little while ago I accompanied my husband, the District Officer for North Transvaal, from our Headquarters at Sibasa to Sambandau for a week-end Campaign. Soon after our arrival the 'bell' was rung, reminding the women of the locality that it was time to start on the journey to the Army Hall for the Meeting I was to conduct. High up on the hillside across the valley is the kraal of the Chief. As the sound of our 'bell' reached him his Induna stepped out upon a rocky terrace which surrounds the Chief's house, and resounded the call on his horn (made from the horn of an eland). The 'echo' reverberated over the mountains—the call of the Chief must always be obeyed and soon a fine company of

women arrived and spent a happy hour under the trees with The Army. At the close eight women, with their babies

tied on their backs, stepped forward and knelt in prayer.

As soon as the darkness fell we made our way to this Chief's kraal, which is a real stronghold in the mountains. After the customary greetings he led us out into the thick forest where a tremendous camp fire was burning. Here one sees the African at his best. Sitting in Halls is foreign to him, but around the camp fire hearts are happy and free.

Our Sambandau Salvationists are real Blood and Fire Soldiers, and there was perfect freedom in testimony. The Chief knelt with us as we prayed. What a joy there is in talking to these dear people of our Heavenly Father! We felt His presence very near.

At the close of the Meeting each of our young people took a burning branch from the fire as a torch to light our way back over the stream, and up the rocky hills, and as we followed in the trail of this happy, singing band of people, we thought of them as true 'torchbearers' carrying the light of God into their African homes and villages.

A large company gathered for prayer at 6.30 a.m. on Sunday and this was followed by the Young People's Meeting, after which we walked a couple of miles across the hills to a village situated in a beautiful canyon. The scenery is wild and the place is thick with undisturbed forest. Our drum, made from the skin of a white goat, calls the people to the 'Place of Indaba,' under the trees in the centre of the scattered huts. At the close of this gathering nineteen women knelt around the drum.

Between the Meetings we were kept busy attending to thirty-six sick ones; truly we are messengers of healing as well as Salvation!

The gratitude of these dear people more than repays our toil!

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1. Attending to a bad eye case; eyelids absolutely skinned, suppuration of weeks had glued the eye-lashes; child unable to see; dead fly 'caught' in the discharge.
2. An ear case at the Dispensary.
3. Sewing class for beginners.
4. Stamping mealies into flour for porridge—as they work they sing Army songs and choruses

simple teaching of reading and writing, it was found possible to impart ability for typewriting, sewing, mat-making, brush manufacture, all through the medium of touch.

As the years advanced, it was felt that better provision should be made for helping those who sit in the darkness, and the result has been seen this year. A suitable site was secured in Kingston, near one of the principal colleges in the island, and upon this has been raised a miniature township of seven substantial buildings, all for the benefit of blind persons.

In the School and Library there is ample accommodation for the students who attend classes throughout the day, and more than 700 volumes in Braille and Moon systems are carefully lodged in capacious cupboards. A piano donated by the Headquarters of The Salvation Army in New York and a wonderful talking book given by the American Foundation for the Blind, following the visit of Helen Keller to the island, are located here. The National Institute for the Blind in England donated records of stories for this book. Selections from the books of the Bible, of poetry, fairy tales, and the classics are already there, but as the Home has no access to any lending library either in America or England, scholars are always glad to have such gifts.

The former American Consul was deeply interested in this work and used to visit the Institution every week for the purpose of reading to the children. He was particularly concerned about the tragic little Eustace and expert medical advice was sought. The Consul was quite determined that if there was any hope of his sight being restored he should be taken to America for the finest treatment available.

ONE little girl came to us from far-away Panama, and although only seven years of age and sightless she travelled all alone and arrived hugging the little dolly which had been her companion on the voyage. She could not read or write when she arrived but now she can read both systems, tell the time and do many other things which add to the interest and usefulness of her life.

Self-Denial time is most affecting. The children insist on being allowed to make some contribution to the work which has made such a difference to their lives, and out of what they have been able to save from the twopence a week pocket money we allow them, and what they are able to add to it by acts of personal self-denial, they make the most generous and touching gifts.

Their training and treatment is as if they were perfectly normal, apart of course from the special nature of the instruction, and it is gratifying to see how, from depressed and despondent young people when they

arrive, they develop, with the aids of books and industry, into self-assured and confident folk with a sense of the beauty and joy of life.

In addition to the blind, a very clever youth of eighteen and the little girl who guides Eustace are deaf and dumb. The youth recently made a model of a saloon car with plush seats and doors that open and shut.

Two of the girls are Corps Cadets and for their efficiency any Brigade would be glad to have them. Some of them can sew with hand and treadle machines, and two or three can cut out and fit a dress with such skill that no one would know it had not been made by a sighted person.

THIS is one of the most satisfying of the branches of service we are able to render in the Territory, although just as many thrilling stories could be told about our police court and prison work, our Homes for men and women, our care of the babies of leper parents (from whom they are parted by law at three days of age), and our legal and investigation work.

And of course, all the time there is the background of evangelical activity, indoor and outdoor Meetings going on all the year round, and leading many men and women to seek a change of heart and life through the power of Christ.

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Some of the Scholars

The bottom left-hand picture shows a girl doing arithmetic with special equipment, next a boy is shown reading, and a girl typing. Above the blind group are three girls including (centre) the child who travelled from Panama with only a doll for her voyaging companion



AN ISLAND

Shut in by the waters of the beautiful Swedish Lake Mälär, counts and barons, architects and airmen, and many another man seeking deliverance from the entangling bonds of inebriety, have been helped by Salvationists to find the way of victory over their besetment. The story of the Kurön Island Colony and its work, and of some 'changed lives' is here told by a Swedish journalist.

Sunlit scenes
from the Colony
of Kurön

(See also page ii of
cover)

ON the lovely Lake Mälär, one of the largest and most beautiful of Sweden's many beautiful lakes, lies the Island of Kurön, on which The Salvation Army's Inebriates' Home is situated, the largest private home of this kind in Sweden.

Here at one time and another, have lived counts and barons. At present there are a couple of military officers, school teachers, architects, airmen, tradesmen, riveters, journalists, authors, lawyers, policemen, commercial travellers, high school teachers, clerks and others, all of them happy.

One spring I saw out there a little, rotund Commissioner for Oaths, of a good family, bearing a name of European renown, who was carting manure out on the fields. He walked by the side of a pair of oxen, singing and whistling in the sunlight. The whole of his round little figure in overalls and a sporting cap verily shone with contentment and the joy of living. Assuredly he had never had such a good time in all his life!

Yes, work is a wonderful remedy and especially work in the open air.

IF on a bright day in early summer one were to arrive at Kurön landing-stage and walk up toward the main building, one would be met by the impression of a beautiful country picture: ten small buildings are surrounded by the white clouds of fruit-tree blossom; there is a chapel with its belfry; the flower beds are bright with roses, dahlias and

other early summer flowers; the white main building stands beneath its yellow and blue national flag, and straight in front, embracing the whole, are the wide blue waters of the lake, shimmering in the sunlight.

The outhouses, the little pigs, ducks, turkeys and hens, the cows, calves, and horses, and possibly a glimpse of a half-tamed hare, heighten the impression of countrified comfort, beauty and order. There is order in everything on this 'Island of Hope.'

The main building is in two stories with a basement and an attic, and contains the kitchen department, store rooms, the large common dining-room seating eighty people, sitting and reading rooms, offices, the doctor's and nurse's receiving rooms, the Superintendent's office and quarters, and four rooms for the other Officers.

The smaller buildings, of which at present there are some ten, are different in size. The largest is built in the latest architectural style on the hillside above the main building with room for twelve patients; there are others slightly smaller, and finally cottages with but two rooms in each, divided by a small entrance hall. The majority of rooms are intended to take two patients each, but there are also eighteen private rooms for which the payment is one kroner extra per day. Nearby are situated the farm buildings, outhouses, electric saw, carpenter's shop and the smithy. Further, there is a laundry and the bath-house.

THE period of a patient's stay in the Institution is reckoned at a year, which is generally considered



Small rectangular label with illegible text, possibly a library or archival mark.

